

Notes on the hydroid, *Syntheceum evansi*

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Synopsis

The Mediterranean hydroid, *Syntheceum evansi* (Ellis & Solander, 1786), has been recorded twice from British waters but neither record can be proved. As the species has not been reported from Britain in the past 150 years it is now removed from the British list.

British records

Syntheceum evansi (Ellis & Solander, 1786) is a large and distinctive hydroid recorded widely in the Mediterranean Sea. However, its first description was based on material said to have been 'brought from' Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, England. But the species has not been recorded from British waters for 150 years and the Norfolk record is in doubt. It is true that the collector, John Evans, worked for the East India Company and was based at Great Yarmouth. Further, George Johnston (1838) recorded that Evans sent specimens to James Petiver's once famous Museum in London and there seems no reason to doubt that he could have supplied the *S. evansi* material to Ellis. Indeed, Ellis often received specimens from traders and based several new species on them. For example Mediterranean material is mentioned in Ellis & Solander's book in five places (pp. 15, 27, 88, 101, 149) and other specimens, from still farther afield, were brought back by East India Company ships (p. 58, twice on p. 107). But as Ellis & Solander's book was posthumous to them both it is possible that the locality data did not receive Ellis' usual careful attention. Further, the illustrations of *S. evansi* were left out of the book and are to be published only now (Wells & Cornelius, in prep.). There was clearly some confusion about the first description and the Norfolk locality cannot be accepted without further proof.

Unfortunately some authors (Lamouroux, 1816; Johnston, 1838, 1847; Landsborough, 1852) repeated the Norfolk record and although it was overlooked by Hincks (1868) and later compilers its accuracy has not been questioned.

The only other British record is also suspect. Lamouroux (in Lamouroux, Bory de Saint-Vincent & Deslongchamps, 1824) stated that he had received material from 'the coast of England'. But this material was not mentioned in his two earlier books (Lamouroux, 1816, 1821); and no specimens were found in Lamouroux' collections by Billard (1909) and Redier (1967). Once again there is no proof that any specimens were collected in British waters.

Conclusion

There have been no records of *S. evansi* from Britain or anywhere else in NW Europe for 150 years. There is only a slim chance that such a large species would have been missed by the many collectors of this period and it seems right to take *S. evansi* off the British list.

References

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